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The Unprofitableness of External,
without Internal Religion.

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the

K I N G,

A T

St. J A M E S's,

January the 1st, 17¹⁵₁₆.

By SAMUEL BRADFORD, D. D.
Prebendary of St. Peter's in West-
minster, and Chaplain in Ordinary
to His Majesty.

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L O N D O N:

Printed for J. WYAT, at the Rose in
St. Paul's Church-Yard. 1716.

The Unprofitableness of External
without Internal Religion

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St. James's

January the 18th 1722.

By SAMUEL BRADFORD, D.D.
Rector of St. Peter's in West-
minster, and Chaplain in Ordinary
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The Epistle of St. Paul to the ROMANS,
Chap. ii. Verses 28, 29.

*He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly;
neither is that Circumcision, which is out-
ward in the Flesh: But he is a Jew,
which is one inwardly; and Circumcision
is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and
not in the Letter, whose Praise is not of
Men, but of God.*



T H E S E Words conclude the second Lesson for this Morning's Service, and were design'd by the Apostle to convince the Jews of a dangerous Mistake, which they had entertain'd concerning the Observation of the *Mosaical* Law, and particularly the Rite of Circumcision. They vainly imagin'd, that no Man could be accepted of God, unless he were either a natural Jew, and train'd up in the Profession of the Law of *Moses*, or became a Profelyte to their Religion: But that being a Jew, or a Profelyte, especially such a Profelyte as submitted to Circumcision, was abundantly sufficient to recom-

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commend a Man to the Divine Favour. St. Paul, in Opposition to this their Error, lets them know, that since the Publication of the Gospel, a Gentile, who should heartily embrace it, would be accepted of God, without being circumcised, or submitting to the Law of *Moses*; and that a Jew, rejecting the Gospel, would be incapable of the Divine Acceptance: Nay farther, that even before the Gospel was published, it was not enough to have been of the Stock of *Abraham*, to have been circumcised, and trained up in the Law of *Moses*, unless they had lived according to the Precepts of that Law, particularly its moral Precepts, approving themselves upright in the Sight of God; and after all, not pretending to hope for his Favour from any Merit of their own, but through the Grace and Mercy of God toward them.

— Ver. 17,
&c.

Behold, says he, thou art called a Jew, and reatest in the Law, and makest thy Boast of God, and knowest his Will, &c. Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thy self? Thou that makest thy Boast of the Law, through breaking the Law, dishonourest thou God?

— Ver. 25,
26, 27.

Upon this he proceeds to shew, that Circumcision then only profited when they kept the Law: And on the contrary, that an uncircumcised Person, who kept the Righteousness of the Law, particularly one who from among the Gentiles embraced the Faith of Christ, and was thereby brought to a Christian Temper and Practice, would rise up in Judgment against an immoral Jew, and would be accepted of God, while such a Jew would be

be utterly rejected by him; concluding in the Words of my Text, *For he is not a Jew, &c.* — Ver. 28, 29.

*He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; that is, He is not such a Person as God expects a Jew should be, who is so only by his Descent from Abraham, and by his Professing the Religion of the Jews: Neither is that Circumcision, which is outward in the Flesh; that is, This is not the thing which God principally design'd by Circumcision; it is not that sort of Circumcision which he expects, if it be no more than in the Flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; The Man whom God approves, and of which sort he design'd the Jews should all have been, is he, who is of the Temper and Spirit which the Law of God, particularly the Moral Part of it, requires him to be, one who inwardly believes in, reverences, and loves Almighty God: And Circumcision is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter; The Circumcision which God approves, and of which the other is but a Figure, is, when the Heart is purified from all evil and corrupt Affections, when the Mind of the Man is renewed by the Grace and Spirit of God; not when he is merely circumcised according to the Letter of Moses's Law; whose Praise is not of Men, but of God. This seems an Allusion to the Word *Judah*, from whence the Word *Jew* is derived, which denotes Praise, according to that Expression of *Jacob* in blessing his Sons, *Judah, thou art he whom thy Brethren shall praise*; and it is as if the Apostle had said, The*

Gen. xlix. 8.

Jew

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Jew whom God accepts, is one who doth not only recommend himself to Men, by his outward Profession; but to God, who seeth his Heart, by the inward Frame and Temper of his Mind; and will therefore have Praise of God, whatsoever the Opinion of Men may be concerning him.

From the Words thus explain'd, I deduce this *Proposition*, as the Subject of my farther Discourse, namely, *That the Principle of that Religion which God approves, and which will, thro' his Mercy in Jesus Christ, render any Man acceptable to him, is in the Heart and Spirit of a Man, form'd and fix'd there by the Grace of the Divine Spirit; and that without this, God will accept no Man, upon account of any external Privileges, Advantages or Professions whatsoever.*

I lay down this *Proposition* in these General Terms; because, what the Apostle here speaks of a Jew, may be with equal Truth pronounced of a Christian; He is not a Christian, which is one outwardly; neither is that Baptism, which is merely external: But he is a Christian, who is one inwardly; and Baptism is that, not of Water only, but of Water and of the Spirit, according to the Declaration of St. Peter, *Baptism doth now save us; not the putting away the Filth of the Flesh; but the answer of a good Conscience towards God.*

And indeed, the Reason upon which the Apostle proceeds, and the Manner of his arguing with the Jews, evidently shew his Meaning to have been to

to assert this as an undoubted Truth; That whatsoever external Advantages or Privileges God had bestowed, or should from time to time confer upon any one Nation, or any one Person more than another; or whatsoever Profession such Nation or Person should make; yet still that which render'd any Man capable of the Mercy and Favour of God, is something within him, rooted in his Heart and Spirit.

In my farther prosecuting this Argument, I propose the following Method.

First, To enquire what that Principle within a Man is, which renders him capable of God's Acceptance.

Secondly, To confirm the Truth of the Proposition, shewing, that this is primarily acceptable to God; and that without it, all external Privileges and Professions avail nothing to this purpose.

Thirdly, To shew what is the real Benefit of any External Privileges, such as being born a Jew, or circumcised, or any thing which answers to these among Christians.

Fourthly, To draw some Inferences, by way of Application.

First, I am to enquire what the Principle within a Man is, which renders him capable of God's Acceptance.

It is express'd in my Text, by being *a Jew inwardly*; and by *the Circumcision of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter*. A Jew was one who outwardly profess'd to believe in the One True God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth;
to

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to worship him only, and to be govern'd by his Law. And consequently he was a Jew inwardly, who had an internal Sense agreeable to this external Profession; one who had worthy Apprehensions of the Divine Majesty, and suitable Affections of Mind towards him; one who worship'd him in Spirit and in Truth, with all the Faculties of his Soul; and one who had heartily devoted himself to him, desiring above all things to know his Will, and being fully determin'd, by his Assistance, to act accordingly. Circumcision in the Flesh was a Figure of that in the Heart; and what that is, we are inform'd in diverse Passages of holy Writ. *Moses*, in his Exhortation to the People, a little before his Death, thus addresses himself to them; *Now*
Deut. x. 12. *Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his Ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul?* adding a little after, *Circumcise therefore the Foreskin of your*
—Ver. 16. *Heart, and be no more stiff-necked.* And again, where he makes mention
Deut. xxx. 6. *of the Lord's circumcising their Heart, and the Heart of their Seed,* he explains himself by adding *to love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart and with all thy Soul.* This it seems was the Circumcision of the Heart, to be no more stiff-necked, but to fear, and love, and serve the Lord with all the Powers of the Soul. In like manner *St. Paul*, writing to the
Colossians,

Colossians mentions the Circumcision of Christ, which he explains by the putting off the Body of the Sins of the Flesh, when Christians at their Baptism undertook to mortify all their corrupt and vicious Inclinations and Passions, which he styles the Circumcision made without Hands; not made in the Flesh by the Hands of Men; but in the Soul, by the Operation of the divine Spirit.

For the setting this Matter in a clear Light, it is to be observ'd, That in this degenerate Estate of Mankind, as we descend from the first Adam, and have no other Nature or Principle in us but what we derive from him, the Image of God, in which he first formed Man, appears to be greatly defaced. We are strongly inclined to the things of Sense, and of this present Life; and we grow up into an inordinate Esteem of the Enjoyments of this World, the Pleasures of Sense, the Possession of this World's Goods, the Grandeur of human Life; these are the things which we are prone to value, to desire and pursue, in the first and chief Place. 'Tis true, we have rational Souls within us, and the Faculties of these Souls, as we grow in Years, are still more and more excited: But after all, they are apt to be chiefly employed in purveying for the Body, and the temporal Concernments of this present State, until a more spiritual and divine Principle be awaken'd in us, till there be excited in our Minds by the Divine Spirit a Sense of Almighty God, and of a future State of Life, infinitely more considerable than that in which we are at present.

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This divine Principle being once thorowly awaken'd in us, we begin to form a different Judgment of things from what we had before ; Our Resolutions, and the very Inclinations of our Souls are changed ; which will naturally have its Effect in a thorow Alteration of the whole Course of our Lives.

If we may express this inward Principle, of which I am speaking, in one comprehensive Word, it must be that by which our Apostle frequently expresses it in this Epistle, namely *Faith*. He declares in the Prosecution of this Discourse, that *Abraham*, the great Patriarch of the Jewish Nation, *was justified by Faith*, and that *his Faith was imputed to him for Righteousness* ; and therefore he proposeth *Abraham* as the great Pattern to all who desired to be accepted of God, whether they were Jews or Gentiles.

As to the Nature of this Faith of *Abraham*, we have a clear Account of it in the sacred Writings. It was such a firm Belief in God, according to the Revelation which God had made of himself to him, as included in it the most profound Reverence of Soul towards that excellent Being ; an absolute Resignation of himself, and all that he had, to the Divine Will ; a ready Disposition of Mind to obey the most difficult Commands ; together with an entire Trust and Confidence in that God, whom he thus revered and obey'd ; a Faith, which, when God required it, made him cheerfully to forsake his Country and his Kindred, sojourning for many Years in a strange Land ; nay, which made him undertake the difficult
Task

Task of offering up his Son, his beloved Son *Isaac*; in a word, which enabled him, as the Scripture expresseth it, *to walk before God, and to be perfect*, that is, upright in his Sight. Gen. xvii. 1.

And by just such a Faith as this, a Jew by Descent became a Jew inwardly; and a Christian by Profession becomes a Christian inwardly; and all pious and good Men, both before and since *Abraham*, have by means of such a Faith become acceptable to God, through the Mediation of our Great Redeemer. This is that great Principle so heartily recommended by the Writer to the *Hebrews*, and illustrated by so many eminent Examples, throughout one Hebr. xi. ¶ whole Chapter of that Epistle; namely, a Believing and Hopeing in Almighty God, according to the Degree of Revelation which he hath made of himself to Men in the different Ages of the World, with a lively, strong, active, and vigorous Faith; such as, being grounded upon worthy Apprehensions of God, and suitable Affections towards him, renews the Image of God in the Soul of Man; and such as, whenever it is try'd, will be able to influence the Heart and Life of him who is endued with it.

I proceed to what I propos'd in the *Second* Place, namely, To confirm the Truth of the *Proposition* which I laid down, shewing, *That this Inward Principle is that which is primarily acceptable to God; insomuch that without it, all External Privileges and Professions avail nothing to this Purpose.*

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Purpose. Which will appear clearly evident, both from Scripture, and from the Reason of the Thing.

St. Paul not only asserts it peremptorily in my Text, but confirms it throughout the first part of this Epistle; in opposition to the Jews, who valued themselves so much, as being descended from *Abraham*, to whom and to whose Seed the Promises were made; and as being entred into Covenant with God by the Rite of Circumcision.

As to Circumcision, the Apostle tells them, that it was appointed to *Abraham* long before the Law of *Moses* was given; and that only
Rom. iv. 10, 11. as a Sign and Seal of the Righteousness of that Faith which he had whilst

he was uncircumcised: So that it was his Faith which render'd him acceptable to God, not his Circumcision. And as for their being descended from *Abraham*, he all along endeavours to make them sensible, that the true Seed of *Abraham*, chiefly intended in the Promise, were not they who were his Seed after the Flesh, but after
Rom. iv. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. the Spirit; those who were of the Faith of *Abraham*, and who walked in the Steps of that Faith, of whatsoever

Stock or Lineage they might be, *Abraham* being the common Father of all who should believe as he did; which was so plain, that the Apostle declares to them, in the latter Part of
Rom. ix. 30, 31, 32. his Discourse on this Subject, That

God was about to cast off the natural Seed of *Abraham*, the Jews, for their Unbelief, and to receive into Covenant those amongst the Gentiles who should embrace the Gospel; which
 accord-

accordingly came to pass in the Age of the Apostles, when the Temple of God at Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, all the Service of it abolished, and the Gentiles became the People of God, in the Room of the Jews.

As to the Testimony of the Scriptures in this Point, I shall only farther cite three remarkable Texts of St. Paul, parallel one to the other, and all of them directly to the Purpose of my present Argument. In Jesus Christ, says he, *neither Circumcision availeth any Thing, nor Uncircumcision; but Faith which worketh by Love.* Again, In Christ Jesus neither *Circumcision availeth any Thing, nor Uncircumcision; but a new Creature.* And once more, *Circumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping the Commandments of God.* Where it is observable, That a new Creature, the Image of God restored in the Soul of Man; and Faith which works by Love, that divine Principle upon which the Love of God, and all other good Dispositions of Soul are grounded; and lastly, the keeping the Commandments of God, the Effect of both the former, are mention'd as the Qualifications absolutely necessary both to Jew and Gentile, without Distinction, in order to Acceptance with God.

And from the Reason of the Thing, the Matter is as evident, as from Scripture itself, whether we consider the Nature of God, or of Man. God is a pure and holy Spirit, and can take Pleasure in no other Worship and Service than what is pure and spiritual. Man is an understanding and reasonable

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sonable Creature, made after the Image of God, and is no other Ways capable of his Favour, than either by retaining or recovering the divine Image, and an entire Resignation to the divine Will. The first Principle of a religious Life, is, as I have already observed, a stedfast Faith in God, such as presupposeth right Conceptions of him, and will naturally produce a profound Devotion to him, even a Reverence and Love which will be the Foundation of a sincere and universal Obedience, together with a perfect Trust and Confidence in him. And wheresoever this Principle is rooted in the Soul, as a Testimony of God's present Acceptance, such a Soul will find Rest to its self; the Spirit of the Man being in that Frame and Temper which is truly natural to it, will feel true Satisfaction from it; and God himself will shed abroad a Sense of his Love, in a Mind thus disposed, by the same Spirit by which this Temper is produced.

The great Design of God in framing such Creatures as we are, was, That we might know, and love, and serve our Maker in this State of our Trial, and become capable of enjoying him in the future State of Recompence: And forasmuch as we are fallen short of the Glory of God, he hath appointed divers Means for our Recovery, affording some Nations, and some particular Persons, greater Plenty of these Means, more Advantages than to others, according to his good Pleasure; all which are still but Means to the End, and will no other Ways render us acceptable to God, than as we improve them to that Purpose. Which brings

brings me to the next Thing I propos'd ;
namely,

Thirdly, To shew what is the real Benefit of any External Advantages or Priviledges ; such as, for Instance, being born a Jew, or being circumcised, or any Thing which answers to these amongst Christians.

This is the Meaning of St. Paul's Question, which he introduceth as an Objection made by the Jews against his Discourse, in the Beginning of the next Chapter, *What Advantage then hath the Jew ? Or what Profit is there of Circumcision ?* To which he immediately returns an Answer, which serves as a satisfactory Account of the Matter before us ; *Much every Way, says he, chiefly because unto them were committed the Oracles of God.* And again, in another Place, testifying the Grief of his Soul for the Rejection of his Countrymen, the Jews, he thus enumerates their Privileges ; *Who are Israelites ; to whom pertaineth the Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promises ; whose are the Fathers, and of whom, as concerning the Flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.* The Sum of which is, That God had taken them for his peculiar People and Children, dwelling among them in the Glory which resided in the Tabernacle, and in the Temple, appointing his Service to be there constantly perform'd ; making a Covenant with them, and giving them visible Signs of that

Rom. iii. 1, 2.

Rom. ix. 4, 5.

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that Covenant; adding special Promises, particularly that of the *Messiah* to be born amongst them, of the Seed of *Abraham* and *David* their famous Ancestors; and finally, giving them his sacred Word, the Scriptures of the Old Testament, those Divine Oracles, for their constant Direction and Guidance. These were great Privileges, and special Advantages; and those of Christians are yet much greater, for the awakening our Consideration, the informing our Judgments, the exciting our Consciences, the quickening our Hopes, and the establishing our Minds. A Jew in former Times had, and especially a Christian since the coming of our Saviour into the World hath, much the Advantage of the rest of Mankind to all these Purposes; for the Improvement of which, the Jews were, and we Christians now are accountable, as for so many proper Means and Helps for the forming of the Divine Image in us; for the begetting a true *Faith*, such as will *work by Love*, and *be made perfect in good Works*; and which, if we make use of them and improve them as we ought, will be effectual, through the Blessing of God, towards attaining the End for which they are design'd: As on the other hand, if we despise or neglect them, they will be only so many Articles of Impeachment against us at the last Day; and instead of rendring us more acceptable to God, they will expose us to an higher Degree of his Displeasure. But I hasten to what I propos'd in the last place, namely, To draw some Inferences from what hath been said, by way of Application.

First,

First, From the Doctrine I have been insisting upon may be clearly deduced this plain and useful Inference, That true Religion hath at all Times, and in all Places, been one and the same; that pious and virtuous Men have in every Age, and in every Nation, been accepted of God upon the same Terms; I mean the inward Principle of a sincere Faith in God, and the Resignation of themselves to him, according to the various Discoveries they have had of his Will concerning them.

It is a certain and unchangeable Maxim, that which St. Peter pronounc'd in the Case of *Cornelius*, and which it seems he did not understand, till he was convinc'd of it by a Vision which he himself had seen, and by the Apparition of an Angel to that devout and charitable Centurion. His Words are these; *Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.* And as such a Person is, and always hath been accepted of God; so no other than such an one is capable of his Favour.

The Patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Christian Religion, tho' differing in several External Circumstances, particularly in the degree of Revelation made by God to Men; yet all agree in this, That nothing hath render'd any Man acceptable to God under either of them, but only that inward Principle of which I have been speaking, which likewise renders all who are endued with it acceptable to him.

It is true, that those to whom God hath reveal'd more Particulars of his Will, are obliged to

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extend their Faith accordingly. He who was born before the giving of the Jewish Law, was bound to believe in God and to worship him, according to the Revelation which he had made of himself to the Children of Men by the Light of Nature, by the Works of Creation and Providence, and by the several Manifestations of himself to the Patriarchs successively, down from *Adam* to *Noah*, to *Abraham*, and to *Moses*. He who was born and bred under the Jewish Dispensation, was obliged to believe in God, and to worship him, according to the Revelation which he had made of himself by *Moses* and the Prophets. And he to whom the Gospel is revealed, is in like manner obliged to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and to worship God according to his Institution and Precepts. The believing in God, the reverencing, loving, and resigning one's self to him, necessarily implies all this; for whosoever doth so, will readily embrace every Truth which God shall think fit to discover to him. But still, the great Principle upon which all, under these several Dispensations, have been accepted, is such a Faith in God, according to the respective Manifestations which he hath made of himself to Men, as will renew the Mind, influence and govern the Heart and Life, and bring Men to an Obedience and Subjection to the Will of God, as far as it is made known to them. God cannot contradict, nor vary from himself; and therefore, although for wise Reasons he hath thought fit to reveal himself to the World, by degrees, at sundry times, and in diverse manners; yet the fundamental Principles of that Religion

Religion which hath been acceptable to him, have been, and always will be, unalterably the same.

Secondly, We may therefore hence learn, who are the Persons to whom we are obliged to extend our Christian Charity, as to our Brethren in Christ Jesus.

When St. Paul, in the Place parallel to my Text, which I mention'd before, had declared, That in Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availed any thing, nor Uncircum- Galat. vi. 15,
16. sion, but a new Creature, namely, the renovation of the Mind by that inward Principle which my Text speaks of; he immediately adds, And as many as walk according to this Rule, Peace be on them, and Mercy, and upon the Israel of God. Those then who walk according to this Rule, are the true Israel of God. We cannot indeed otherwise judge of the inward Dispositions and Tempers of Men, than as they discover them in their Conversations. If therefore we behold Men living Sober, Righteous, and Godly Lives; if we know them to be careful in the Observance of the great moral Precepts of our holy Religion; and at the same time serious and devout Worshippers of the true God, through the Mediation of his Son Jesus Christ; in a word, if their Tempers and their Lives are truly Christian; though it should happen, that in some Instances of less Importance, in Matters not essential to Christianity, they should in their Judgments differ from us; since the Peace and Mercy of God in Jesus Christ are extended to them, we should, as far as lies in us, be at Peace with them, exercising our Good-will and Charity towards them, as our Fellow-Christians.

This truly Christian Temper, if once it could

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prevail in the Christian World, would by degrees restore the Church of Christ, which was design'd to be one Body, to its Primitive Union and Integrity ; and would soon put an end to those unhappy Divisions and Contentions which have been too long a Scandal to the Reformed Churches themselves, and have too frequently exposed them to the Designs and Contrivances of their subtil and restless Adversaries of the Church of *Rome*.

Thirdly, We are farther instructed from this Doctrine, to be exceedingly thankful to Almighty God, who hath afforded to us Christians greater Spiritual Privileges and Advantages, than to any others. He hath not left us to the meer Light of Nature and Reason, which how little it is improved in the Gentile World is too evident. He hath not left us to those Traditions whereby the Patriarchs were instructed ; which, considering the length of their Lives in the early Ages of the World, could transmit a much clearer and more certain Light, than Tradition in our Age could possibly do. We are not left to the imperfect Revelation of *Moses*, which, compar'd with that of Christ, was but a Shadow, or as it were a glimmering of Light : No, but we enjoy *the Light of the glorious Gospel* of our Saviour, even as St.

Paul expresses it, *the Light of the*
2 Cor. iv. 4, 6. *Knowledge of the Glory of God, in the*
Face of Jesus Christ, who came to discover the Will of God clearly and fully to us, and to afford us all the Instruction, Encouragement, and Assistance which we can reasonably desire.

Had the *Israelites the Adoption* ? It was but as Children under Age : But we Christians have *the Adoption of Sons*, grown up

Gal. iv. 5.

up to Maturity. Did the Glory of God, manifesting it self in a bright Cloud, appertain to them? The Word of God was made Flesh, and dwelt in his human Body, as in a Tabernacle amongst us, full of Grace and Truth; Joh. i. 14. and his Glory appear'd as the Glory of the Only-begotten of the Father. And though we our selves did not behold him; yet we reasonably believe in him, upon the sure Testimony of those who were Eye-witnesses of his Majesty and Glory. Had they the Covenants, one made with Abraham, and the other by the Ministry of Moses? We have the new Covenant, made with the true Seed of Abraham, by the Son of God himself appearing in human Nature. Had they the giving of the Law? We, of the Gospel. Had they the Service of God, appointed by the Law, a ritual, ceremonial, and therefore a burdensome Service? We have a more perfect, Spiritual Service, a Service more agreeable and delightful to a reasonable Mind, appointed by the Gospel. Had they the Promises of a Messiah to come? We know that he is long since come, and hath given us great and precious Promises to be fulfilled to all his Disciples, in part in this Life, but more fully in the Life to come. Finally, Were the Oracles of God committed to them? To us Christians much more; namely, not only those given out by Moses and the Prophets; but these with the Addition of the Words of our Lord, of his Evangelists and Apostles. All which Considerations ought to excite our Gratitude, to strengthen our Faith, to confirm our Hope, and to quicken our Obedience.

Fourthly, It is farther a proper Instruction from this Doctrine, that we take Care not to value or boast of any of these Privileges, so as to rely upon

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upon them, without improving them to the Purpose for which they were designed. This were to fall directly into the same Error for which St. Paul in this Epistle rebukes the Jews. Yet so it is; many Christians also have exposed themselves to the like Reprehension.

Might not one argue with a great Number of professed Christians, as St. Paul here did with the Jews, only varying some few Words, on Account of their different Professions? *Behold! thou art called a Christian, and reatest in the Profession of the Christian Faith; thou makest thy boast of God, and of Christ; thou knowest the Will of God, and approvest the Things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the Gospel, and art confident that thou art an Instructor and Teacher of others; which hast the Form of Knowledge, and of the Truth in the Religion of the Gospel: Thou therefore which teachest another, teach-*

est thou not thy self? Thou that sayest,
Tit. ii. 11, 12. *that the Grace of God that bringeth Salvation hath appeared to thee, teaching thee, that denying Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, thou shouldst live soberly, righteously, and godly; dost thou allow thy self in any Practice contrary to this plain and standing Rule of thy Religion? Thou that abhorrest Idols, and hast renounced all Idolatry as a Work of the Devil, dost thou live in the Neglect of the true God, and of his Son Jesus Christ? Dost thou forbear to worship and serve him, according to the Institution of his Son from Heaven? Thou that makest thy boast of the Gospel, by thy transgressing its Precepts dishonourest thou God, and thy Redeemer? The Consequence of all this must necessarily be, that whosoever enjoys the Privileges and Advantages which Christians have, and yet doth*
not

not attain to the Temper and Life of a Christian, at that Day, when every Man shall be judged according to his Works, with a due Respect had to the Advantages afforded him for his Direction and Assistance therein, instead of receiving the Recompence of a Christian, he shall have his Portion with Hypocrites and Unbelievers.

But then, on the other hand,

Fifthly, We ought to take in this Caution also, not to despise or neglect any of the Institutions of Religion, under the Pretence of their being External. This is the Error that some vain and conceited Enthusiasts have fallen into, imagining, that because true Religion is inward, *in the Heart and in the Spirit*; therefore those who have attain'd to what is Internal, are above the need or use of what is External. But these should consider, that Circumcision amongst the Jews, and the Feast of the Passover, were both of them External Institutions: yet in the Appointment of them God thought fit to annex that severe Threatning, that whosoever should voluntarily neglect either of them, should be cut off from his People. And in like manner

Geh. xvii. 14.

Exod. xii. 15.

19.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are External Rites to Christians; but such as are positively instituted by our Lord, and consequently to be observed faithfully by all his Disciples, under the censure of being accounted; if they wilfully neglect them, Despisers of their Saviour's Institutions. As, on the other hand, if we use them as we ought, they will become, not only Signs of something Internal and Spiritual; but also Pledges to assure us thereof; and even Means of attaining that Grace which

24 *The Unprofitableness of External, &c.*

which they are appointed to signify, through the Blessing of God attending the due Use of them.

Lastly, The principal Use of this Doctrine should be to excite us all to endeavour after that inward Principle, which will constitute us Christians in secret, as well as openly, that Circumcision, which is of the Heart, in the Spirit, not in the Letter. If we are Christ's, we must crucify the Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts. If we have learn'd Christ; if so be we have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the Truth is in Jesus; we must put off the old Man which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts; and be renewed in the Spirit of our Mind, putting on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness; and being conform'd to the Likeness of him, who condescended to take our Nature upon him, that he might set us a Pattern for our Imitation.

It is true, the Assistance of the Divine Spirit is necessary to these great Purposes: But this is the peculiar Promise of the Gospel, that God will give his Holy Spirit to them who sincerely and earnestly ask it of him; and that he will never be wanting in the Aids of his Grace, to those who employ their own faithful and constant Endeavours.

May we all partake of that Divine Spirit, and thereby be perfectly form'd into the Temper and Spirit which manifested itself in our Blessed Redeemer, when he vouchsafed to appear upon Earth; that at his Second glorious Appearance he may own us as his Disciples; and that our Praise may then be found not to be of Men, but of God.

F I N I S.